

VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE RENEWAL PROJECT: AN OVERVIEW

It is more than two decades since the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre opened its doors.

The Centre has seen impressive achievements during this time. We have made lasting, positive impacts on the lives of Holocaust survivors, providing a place to remember, mourn, socialize and access services.

The VHEC has introduced generations of students to the lessons of the Holocaust and inspired them to value social justice and human rights.

We have strengthened the abilities of educators to teach this complex history in age-appropriate ways, through professional development opportunities, outreach programs and in-class materials like book sets and “Discovery Kits.”

The Centre has presented 57 exhibitions, more than half of them original projects and many incorporating aspects of local or Canadian history, supported by archival materials and museum artefacts.

Through VHEC symposia and outreach speakers programs, tens of thousands of young British Columbians have heard eyewitness testimony from survivors of the Holocaust — an opportunity many have written to tell us has been among the most impactful experiences of their school years.

At our gala event last year, titled “Looking Back ... Moving Forward,” we shared the story of the diversity and breadth of the educational and remembrance work done by the VHEC. The story continues.

Built on the substantial achievements of the Centre’s past, an ambitious VHEC Renewal Project, with support from the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program, is positioning the Centre for the future.

What are the objectives of the Renewal Project?

The VHEC Renewal Project will:

- Improve the visitor experience through enhancements to the physical space of the Centre
- Increase access to our collections through interactive technologies
- Increase the Centre’s impacts beyond our physical space by improving online access to our collections
- Preserve an invaluable collection of artefacts and archival materials, and utilize them in support of the Centre’s mandate of educating about and remembering the Holocaust
- Include programs and resources presenting new ways of transmitting eyewitness accounts anchored in learning objectives

THIS PROJECT IS FUNDED IN PART BY THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION.



Please check back via the VHEC website at www.vhec.org for ongoing updates on the Renewal Project as well as any news affecting programs or meetings. You can also email info@vhec.org or call **604.264.0499**.

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Why is the Renewal Project necessary?

The VHEC is seeing increased demand from the audiences we serve. Changes to the B.C. curriculum emphasize the promotion of social responsibility, as well as historical and critical thinking skills.

The VHEC's school programs and teaching resources, many of which offer opportunities to engage with Holocaust-era primary sources from our collections, dovetail with the needs of educators and students.

Planning for the future, the Centre is developing new ways of transmitting first-person accounts of the Holocaust anchored in learning objectives. Students in grades six through 12, and teachers, are the VHEC's core target audiences. Both through infrastructural improvements to the Centre and through enhanced use of technologies, the VHEC will significantly strengthen delivery of programs to these important groups. By improving access to the VHEC's collections, the VHEC Renewal Project will position the Centre as a leading innovative teaching museum for years to come. Enhancements to the physical space of the Centre will make the visitor experience more fulfilling, whether for school and community group visits or for individual visitors and researchers.

Does the Renewal Project meet an urgent need?

In addition to increasing demand from our core constituents, the VHEC is also preparing for a post-eyewitness era. Survivor testimonies have been central to engaging young people in the history and lessons of the Holocaust. The number of survivors who are able to share their stories is declining, but we are fortunate to have one of the earliest collections of audio-video Holocaust survivor testimonies, initiated in the late 1970s by Dr. Robert Krell, founding president of the VHEC and a professor of psychiatry at the University of British Columbia.

Through funding by the Government of Canada, we are digitizing survivor testimonies, which is critical to the VHEC's ability to expand our educational work and share these eyewitness accounts with future generations.

In addition to advancing the preservation and access to testimonies, the VHEC has developed a pedagogy component to the project. "Primary Voices: Teaching Through Holocaust Survivor Testimony" is a web-based teaching resource currently in development that recognizes that Holocaust survivors' accounts of persecution, loss, and survival — their primary voices — are distinct learning opportunities that support students' engagement with primary and secondary sources.

The Renewal Project will ensure that students, educators, researchers and the general public have improved access to the VHEC's testimonies and collections broadly, and support their integration into future exhibitions and educational programs.

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How will the project affect the VHEC's collections?

New strategies to support the preservation, access to and exhibition of primary source materials will enhance the renewed facility, and better serve the Centre's audiences. Improved infrastructure resulting from the Renewal Project – including the integration of visible storage and technology into our space — will allow the VHEC to better support the educational use of our collections.

In addition, improvements will support the highest standards of care and future expansion of our invaluable holdings.

What does the Renewal Project mean for the future of the VHEC?

The VHEC Renewal Project represents a significant advancement in our ability to deliver our programs and expand access to our collections. When completed, in early 2018, the VHEC will be superbly positioned to build on our reputation as a leading Holocaust teaching museum.

While built and sustained for and by British Columbians, the Centre is known by those in Holocaust scholarship, research, education and remembrance around the world as a source of leading-edge initiatives. This Renewal Project will ensure that the VHEC can continue to engage audiences here — especially B.C. high school students and teachers — while strengthening knowledge of the Holocaust and its lessons for social justice and human rights far beyond our community.

How will the renewal project affect VHEC programs?

The VHEC Renewal Project will cause some interruption of activities at the Centre beginning in July through December 2017.

While there will be no exhibition and no class visits to the Centre during this period, most aspects of the Centre's important work will continue uninterrupted.

- Symposia programs and Outreach Speakers will be scheduled as usual
- Classroom workshops will be offered to schools in the fall, with details forthcoming
- Educational resources, including teacher's guides, discovery kits and classroom book sets, will continue to be available
- Commemorative programs, including the High Holidays Cemetery Service and the Kristallnacht Commemorative Lecture, will proceed
- Donations to the archives will continue to be accepted by appointment only
- The library will be closed during the Renewal Project period and outstanding loans are requested to be returned
- Tribute cards will continue to be sent to mark special occasions and condolences

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